A brand new magazine! VOL. 09

# C-PIA! MAGAZINE

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WHAT'S OVER THERE!?
「TENEREZZA」
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「HAPPY PRINCESS ~ANOTHER FAIRYTALE~」

SPECIAL FEATURE!
「DAGGER」 SERIES

TRANSLATIONS & RELEASES

And More!

C-pia!



This magazine is distributed for free.

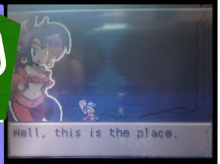
Send all feedback, submissions, and business inquiries to
TakafumiSakagami@gmail.com

c-pia.github.io

## Shantae: Risky Revolution

Platformer - GBA

7/10



Play as Shantae, a half-genie with the ability to transform into different animals, on a quest to save the world from a pesky pirate's schemes.
Comedic cutscenes and puzzling level layouts make up most of the appeal.

Shantae is an action platformer franchise where every entry is a little bit different. Until now, I had never been impressed by a Shantae game.
This one, however, is just right for my tastes. The small changes go a long way.

Released in 2025, it's notably more advanced than a lot of games on the system, and compared to the other handheld titles in the franchise, it controls incredibly well.
The writing style is at its best here. It's toned-down enough to not be insufferable, but characterful enough to endear.

It has some issues. Some of the bosses can become tedious and repetitive, and the game does feel slightly incomplete, but if you like exploring levels to unlock new powers that let you explore even further, you'll have a great time with Risky's Revolution.

## Mugen Senshi Valis

Platformer - Super CD-ROM²

4/10

The first entry in a franchise that no one loves, but everyone wants to like.
Beginning as a Sailor Senshi-styled game, a girl named Valis is made a warrior and outfitted as a soldier, then sent to defeat an encroaching evil.
Along the way, she'll face unexpected enemies and face the trials of her past.

This is a CD-based remake of the first game in the franchise, and as such, the story is told via slowly-paced, cheesily-performed animated cutscenes. They're kinda bad, but there's an appeal to them.

The gameplay is an awkward action-platforming affair where movement feels sluggish and level design is purposefully opaque in the designer's intentions. It can be a frustrating experience, and overcoming the game's challenges rarely feels satisfying, but once you get the hang of movement, it does have a decent flow to it.

At the very least, this remake of the first game is by far and away the most enjoyable entry in the Valis franchise. Just... don't expect to have a better than okay time with it.

## Cleopatra Fortune

Puzzle - Saturn

5/10

A Tetris-style game made with the combined powers of Taito and Natsume.
You have three primary types of blocks: stone, gem, and sarcophagus. If you make a line of any given type, they'll be cleared and you'll gain points.

The main way of play, however, involves encasing the more precious blocks in stone. When you've encased your treasure, it'll all be cleared, you'll gain points, and everything built above it will fall down.
This way, you can set up a streak of line completions and improve your score quickly.

The main gameplay mode focuses on the classic Tetris progression of grinding through vaguely dilineated "levels", but an additional mode provides developer designed problems which you have to solve. They get tricker as you go, but it's a great way of learning the game's mechanics.

# 2026 March

## IN THIS ISSUE...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⑨ **What Are You Reading?**


A little look at Little Lovers spinoff, She So Game.

What do you get when you turn a dating sim into a competitive board game?

⑲ **Something Special About...**


What happens when you trick your fanbase into designing the perfect heroine?

The answer comes from Happy Princess fandisc, Another Fairytale.

㉓ **Special Feature!**

When an indie developer chose to expand their short fantasy tale into a route-based romance story, they unknowingly began a two-decade long development.

Here's our special feature on the recently-completed Dagger series!

# ISSUE INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME TO THE NINTH ISSUE OF C-PIA!

**Let's take a quick look at the contents to get familiar with what this magazine offers.**

Every issue will begin with a short introduction alongside the contents and staff introductions.

Then we have 6 main articles to share!

In **What are you Reading?** one of our writers will talk a bit about a VN they've been reading.

This time, Taka will be talking about *Little Lovers She So Game* for the PSX.

**What's Over There!?** Oh, it's two game reviews!

First up, Tsukiyo talks about *Dragon Quest IX.* Then, Taka's back with Aquaplus's *Tenerezza.*

There's something special about every game.

In **Something Special About...** we sit down to examine what makes a game so special.

**Have You Ever...?**

We ask a question about habits or opinions, and maybe get a response or two.

We've got a **special feature** on an indie series that's been on-going for over two decades! It's all fantasy and fighting in *Dagger.*

A meta layer is always fun, so in **C-pia Spirits** we'll sit down to talk about this very magazine.

Looking for fanart, promotions, reader submissions and more!

## Introducing the staff!

This issue is brought to you by:

### Takafumi Sakagami

Busy trying not to die

Favourite VN: Tomoyo After ~It's a Wonderful Life~
Favourite character: Tomoko Fujinami (Canvas2)

My first Visual Novel was Shuffle!. The anime adaptation chose the wrong girl!

Then planetarian, and the TLs for Kanon and F/SN dropped just in time to keep me reading. I was an addict from then on.

### Tsukiyo

A new face!

Favourite VN: Princess Waltz
Favourite character: Miles Edgeworth (Ace Attorney)

No matter what VNDB purists claim, Ace Attorney is a VN series!

## Get in Touch!

**We're always after new submissions, whether you're a writer, artist, or just a fan of VNs.**
**If you've been reading, let us know!**

# 狂った果実

美少女サスペンスロマン

A Windows port of Fairytale's horror classic—Kurutta Kajitsu is slated to launch May 2026!

English and Chinese language options will be available day 1.

Check our sources!
c-pia.github.io

## BREAKING NEWS

**The Rockman.EXE mobage: Phantom of Network & I**



FAIRYTALE

Cut through waves of bad guys on... the Game Boy!?

The **Last Crown Warriors** demo is free to try today!

In a ruined world where humanity no longer exists you find an empty village and meet artificial lives.

**Welcome to Ruin Village.**

Explore, build, fish, catch bugs, relax, and maybe even find love in this peaceful, empty world.

**Legend of Network have been ported to PC by a fan!**

A mystery's afoot in **Detective Instinct: Farewell, My Beloved**!
A woman goes missing on a train, or at least, that's the story one passenger tells. To everyone else, that woman never existed.



A sequel to the SFC RPG **Lady Stalker** has been announced! ...for the Famicom? The **Landstalker**-based original was first proposed as a **Dragon Quest IV** spin-off, so **Lady Stalker 2D** will be a turn-based RPG in **Dragon Quest** style.



NES-style gameplay meets SNES-style graphics in **Dungeon Antique 2**, an old-school dungeoncrawler RPG. Create your characters and dive into a substantial job system. A free demo is available, and your demo saves can be transferred to the full game!

## - My Merry May with be HD Remaster announced! -

# Fan Translations Galore!

Suzumiya Haruhi no Chokuretsu — Haroohie

Ys (PC-8801) — Rednaxela, Fishbone

Shizuku (PC-8801) — Her-Saki

Mabino×Style — Gopicolo, monnekey

Airs Adventure — SnowyAria, hitomi2500

Magical Date — Campanella999

Necros no Yousai — washbear

NOVA — Fuzion

Tales of Destiny DC — Life Bottle

Bakuretsu Muteki Bangaioh — GammaTrove

Blaze and Blade Busters — Ben128

Emerald Dragon (Super CD-ROM²) — Supper

Natsu no Ame -Summer Rain- — Dat Boi

**Beta patch for Xenosaga I+II (NDS) fan translation**

# WHAT ARE YOU READING?

# SHE SO GAME

Article Writer:
Takafumi Sakagami

Little Lovers

Release Date: 1999年9月2日
Genre: Tabletop SLG
Price: 6,800円

Little Lovers
SHE SO GAME

**The Christmas season has come and gone. I spent my December on this festive game.**

**It's even more obscure than the last one!**

## BACKSTORY

In the early, experimental era of CD-based PC games, Nikkei and NTT worked together with a mostly un-recognisable development team to create **Little Lovers**. The year is 1996, Vpets are having their big breakthrough, and by 1997, the concept of raising a small creature had manifested as a small boom of raising SLGs involving beautiful girls. **Little Lovers** is one of the lesser-known entries from that time period.

As a PC simulation game, **Little Lovers**—much like other software in the genre at the time—tied the progression of the game to real world time. You put in your disc, pick a highschooler, and act as an older brother or father figure to your heroine of choice, but after three months, your time with her is over.

You can still choose another kid and restart... but if you want to progress your time with your favourite girl, you better be ready to pay up! Each heroine had their own disc available for purchase, adding a year of gameplay.

It seems to have sold decently well relative to the average galge of the '00s (we'll ignore Vpets), even without factoring in additional purchases, so naturally, it got a sequel! But we're not talking about that! We're taking a look at the sole spinoff entry that this short lived franchise received...

■ Little Lovers SHE SO GAME

■ The original three heroines

■ Little Lovers character CDs

■ As always, I'm using a CRT shader during my playthrough. If you're curious what the game looks like without it, here is a quick comparison of the two!

Marketed prematurely, trapped in development hell for a while, and released in 1999, **She So Game** is supposed to be hopping on the wave of another trend in the market: party games. The party bishoujo game fad was also going on at this time, but... the delays in development resulted in the game launching after all of these fads had grown tired.
Even the home console gal game market would begin to decline towards the turn of the century, save for a brief flicker of life in the mid-2000s off the back of titles like **Fate/Stay Night** and **Clannad**.

So if you didn't already guess from how unknown this title is, **She So Game** didn't do very well.
The development team disbanded before long, the writer vanished and the artist followed shortly after, though the director moved to Chunsoft where he worked on stuff like **999**, **428: Shibuya Scramble**, the first **Pokémon Mystery Dungeon**, and my personal favourite, the original **Monster Strike** anime plus its 3DS adaptation.

That's a crying shame. Look up magazines from that time and you'll undoubtedly stumble upon promotion for it, with its star-studded voice cast and pretty concept art. Then, you start it up, and... Well, let's talk about the game part.

■ **Designed by artist Chikanaga Sanae, The six heroines have many outfits and expressions!**

You, (with three other players), act as a group of freshly-enrolled high school students, and, in **The Game of Life** fashion, you lead your own lives. Pick your club, focus on certain talents, and so on... Sometimes one (or all) of you will get dragged into trouble or have a special encounter, and you can basically think of it as an SLG ala **Tokimeki Memorial** or a **LovePlus**, but with each player having their own role in that simulated world.

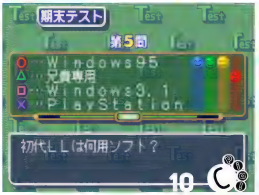
But all of this is driven by dice. Well, technically not, but... you roll a number, you move that many spaces across a tile-based board game, triggering an effect that depends on which tile you land upon. There are cards with special uses, minigames with rewards, and scenes that show off some story. It's **Mario Party** for the boys.

You can play with human players or with bots, or a combination of the two. I think the bots actually make the game harder, so you may want to avoid using them.

Anyway, halfway through your first year of high school, a girl transfers into your class: Shindou Yurika. She's a magazine model.
Fittingly, I discovered this game via Yurika's modelling in magazines, and that's why I'll be focusing on her for this.
There are other heroines, some of which you may encounter during a playthrough, two of which are particularly notable for their story content, and structure-wise, it's very basic:

You select your heroine at the very start. The original three heroines are joined by three new girls, for a total of six routes across two discs.

Obviously, endings are going to differ depending on your gameplay, so you could get a fair few hours out of a single route.
It's not as replayable as the more famous party games, but hitting a good end will take you as much time as it'd take to complete a route in a modern Key title like **Summer Pockets**. Maybe a bit uncomfortable without taking any breaks whatsoever, but a single, short break is enough.



# What Are You Reading?

Little Lovers.
SHESOGAME

Our heroine, Yurika, makes an enemy of the classroom's social organiser, but the boys (us) are there to defend her. That is, until a new year begins and they all get split up. Now, Yurika is stuck in the class of a girl who hates her, and shortly after this, the signs of bullying begin to show. That's the hook.

While a slow-burn story of three high school years plays out, you're caught up in the usual dating sim loop, and I'd say this is one of the good ones. The best way to tell is if it feels satisfying to succeed. I've played some where it felt like I was just going through the motions or tediously dealing with the core gameplay loop, and this isn't one of those; there's an interesting balance between that usual genre formula and the competitive angle.

There's also an equally interesting balance between that competitive angle and the fact that every player wants to support the heroine. You each have a personal victory to aim for, but helping the heroine is always the main goal.

In that, I return to the artwork. It's very ambitious, but it is also a bit messy. While the actual in-game art can be a bit inconsistent, sometimes even incomplete (to comedic effect), the designer's sensibilities definitely come through when it counts.

Beyond the game, it's even more clear. Look how broody and melancholic all the concept and promo art can get; it almost reaches **L no Kisetsu** levels!

You can expect some of that atmosphere to make it into the game. Between the comedy and the gameplay, paired with the plinky-plonk music used during those moments, is a beautiful piano and a quiet drama plot that's willing to make readers uncomfortable. It feels, for genre standards at the time, surprisingly mature, with a greater focus on storytelling.

More than anything, it's that maturity that made me want to continue playing, and it's what has recommending this game to others.

I'm not much of a fan of sims, to be honest. I've played a lot, my 3DS even has a design of my favourite **LovePlus** girl on the case, (it's Rinko btw), and I can appreciate the mechanics these games employ, but I will always prefer a single-focus reading experience over a hybrid one.

For example, I really like Erika from **Imadoki no Vampire**, but man... that game isn't fun to play sometimes, so I've never been able to recommend it to anyone.

I don't know what the perspective of an SLG aficionado would be... I imagine they'd find some of the multiplayer mechanics and RNG additions annoying due to the loss of control it forces upon the player, but y'know, as a reading experience, I really think it's worth the time.

It has that ideal SLG effect, to me. I opened an old save to get some extra screenshots and, while rushing through it, I somehow ended up on an earlier, completely different success path from my first playthrough. The events and interactions were different in ways both large and small. In that way, it's the sort of game where looking up a video won't give you the full experience, and to me, that's a sign of success.

You may have to struggle through **Little Lovers** trivia and Baseball quizzes, but I enjoyed my time with it, and I think a lot more people will enjoy it than currently know of it.

# What's Over There!?

# Dragon Quest IX
## Sentinels of the Starry Skies

Article Writer: Tsukiyo

The year is 2010. Lady Gaga's Bad Romance and Ke$ha's Tik Tok are in the charts. Germany didn't win the FIFA World Cup in South Africa, but they somehow won the Eurovision Song Contest. I stroll into the local Game Stop and look for some "anime" games in the used DS games section. And in 2010, there was no game box looking more anime than *Dragon Quest 9 - Sentinels of the Starry Sky*. See?

The *Dragon Quest* series has been around since 1986 and is as beloved and iconic in Japan as *Final Fantasy*. It's pretty much THE JRPG.

The character and monster designs are by none other than *Dragon Ball*'s Akira Toriyama. Those in the US knew the first seven games by the title *Dragon Warrior*, but the franchise didn't come to Europe until 2006, with *Dragon Quest 8* for the PS2. So *Dragon Quest 9* was my first encounter with the franchise.

The default Hero appearance

When you start the game, you can immediately create your character. Different skin tones, height, several eye designs and hairstyles. Since they're all in Akira Toriyama's style, you can easily recreate some of your favorite *Dragon Ball* or *Dr. Slump* characters, just sans the muscles. Considering that this was the same year that *Pokemon Black and White* came out, having this kind of character creation seemed amazing to me.

You can finally go full super Saiyan!

Create your character.
1 Gender Male
2 Body Type Type 1
3 Hairstyle Type 7
4 Hair Colour Type 5
5 Face Type 9
6 Skin Colour Type 1
7 Eye Colour Type 6
8 Name:

# DRAGON QUEST IX
## Sentinels of the Starry Skies

After a short introduction, you start in a village, but none of the villagers can see you. Your character is a celestial, the new guardian of Angel Falls. Under instruction from your teacher, Aquila, you help villagers with their problems, and their gratitude transforms into Benevolessence. After finishing the tutorial missions, you and your teacher return to the Observatory where the celestials live. It's a giant building in the sky. On top sits the world tree, which you sacrifice Benevolessence to. All the celestials await the day the world tree blooms···

Stella

After going through a lot of optional small talk with numerous NPCs in the Observatory, and some cutscenes (including a hand-drawn one) you lose your wings and begin to journey through the human world.

Always accompanying you is your blonde, tanned, gyaru fairy: Stella. She isn't involved in combat, but is seen whenever using the menu, as well as in the story sequences.

Unlike in other Dragon Quest games, there are no unique permanent party members outside of DLC content, and the story always acts as if it's just you and Stella. Instead, you get to create custom party members in the second town's inn. Your party can only hold four members in total. It's possible to create more party members and swap them out if needed While you can only create characters with base classes, you will quickly unlock the option to switch classes.

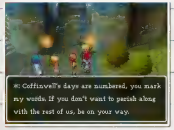
There are several classes locked behind unique quest lines. The starting class is minstrel a jack of all trades who can use swords and fans, basic healing magic and some spells. Levelling up gives you ability points, which you can invest into class or weapon skills. These can be used even after changing class, and if you finish a weapon skill tree, every class can use said weapon. Your squishy wizard can wield a giant axe!

You can reset a maxed class to level 1 to accumulate further ability points. Gear is visible. You can dress like a cool warrior, a bunny girl, even as a slime stack! Most shops will sell unique weapons, so it's worth checking them out. Plus, you can always craft more with alchemy. You might not expect a game from 2009 to have a crafting system this extensive but here we are. There's crafting material all over the game world and in the procedurally generated treasure map dungeons.

The game allows you to craft without using a recipe, so you can look them up online and craft what you need as long as you have the materials. The best gear's made via crafting.
In the post-game, you can spend hundreds of hours exploring new areas, fight never-before seen monsters in grottos and complete tons of new quests just to complete the alchemy compendium.

"But what about the story!?"

You are travelling the world, trying to regain your wings and deal with the intro's fallout. Every town you visit has its own independent story. They're short, unrelated to one another, and are supposed to tug on your heartstrings. A town is plagued by a mysterious, deadly disease. Elsewhere a rich orphan is kidnapped. A beautiful soundtrack elevates the emotions of the many quests.




Despite the bittersweet stories, the tone is mostly light-hearted. It's full of puns and silly jokes. The English version is written in ye olde English, so it might be difficult for non native speakers to read.

There's a huge amount of DLC quests and items, including costumes of characters from previous games. Thankfully, the content is already in the game, so you can unlock it with a GameShark, a save editor, or via fan servers for a more authentic experience.

@ dqix.github.io/editor

Dragon Quest 9 was a great game back when it came out, and it's still a great game now.
The only actual drawback is the classic JRPG turn-based combat, but I'm sure most people have some podcasts they can tune into while going through a dungeon. You can choose to just play the story, or you can spend hours exploring the post-game. It's worth it either way.

Article Writer:
Takafumi Sakagami

# テネレッツァ
# Tenerezza

## What's Over There!?

The Aquaplus game of this issue is **Tenerezza**, the forgotten child of their early JRPG lineup that released between **Utawarerumono** and **Tears to Tiara**.
It released on Xbox in 2003 after a troubled development, it wound up delayed multiple times. Signs of that trouble definitely show; the game suffers from a bug that prevents the player from progressing unless they skip a certain cutscene. You then have to go to the Aquaplus website and download a txt file to read what the scene was about!

I could tinker with the game to fix this, as I did with Kimi ga Yobu, Megiddo no Oka de in an earlier issue of C-pia! Magazine, however, I don't have a way to take screenshots of my Xbox, and this wouldn't be much of an article without images, so I'm just gonna roll with the PC port.
This PC port, which came out a couple months after the Xbox original, adds a small bit of content and fixes some bugs, plus, there's an update patch which fixes further bugs.

While we're talking about the tech, I should mention that very recently, an individual by the name of 'hockeytree' has set up a proof of concept translation project for both the Xbox and PC versions. If this game catches your interest and you'd like to tinker with the scripts, there's a guide on Github and some downloads on archive.org.

Also, there's an incredibly small speedrun community for this game (two entire people!) and New Game+ runs look to take around an hour, so for an RPG, runs are quite short. I tried it myself, and after struggling with Livesplit for a while and fixing my broken OBS layout, I got a final time of *1 hour, 09 minutes, and 35 seconds*. See if you can beat it!

We play as Tenerezza, the self-titled Magical Mahou Witch Bishoujo. On a near-festival day, Tenerezza is chatting with an aspiring ojousama, Choco, when she learns that the local adventure-loving guy Indy has gone missing.
In pursuit of him, Tenerezza learns that monster activity in the area around home has substantially increased. Upon reporting this to the mayor, she's put in charge of finding out what's going on.
Entire crowds of people are about to arrive. If the area is full of monsters, it could spell bad news.

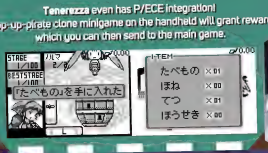
Gaining help from a fairy named Roro, Tene ventures into an adventure far larger than she'd ever expected. But as the world's greatest and most beautiful witch (self-claimed) she'll boldly take on any enemy. Along the way, you'll meet allies such as Selius (who shares a voice with To Heart's Masashi) and fight against foes such as Shahram (who's voiced by the actor of To Heart's Serio). Oh, and all these characters are designed by the To Heart designer. You can certainly tell this is an Aquaplus product.

Ultimately, the goal is to gather four elemental mcguffins. The plot is light and generic, as is often the case with this subgenre of comfy JRPG. The comedy can get repetitive at times, but it's a very cute feel-good game that is oddly addictive to play through. If you swapped the Aquaplus logo at the start for a Gust logo, I don't think I would question anything. It's a mix of worlds.

If you ignore all those small P/ECE titles
(sorry P/ECE fans! Or fan, if there's only one of you...)
**Tenerezza** is the first original Aquaplus game!

Did you know the **Little Lovers** devs worked on the P/ECE?
They went uncredited, of course, but I can assure you, they did.
I didn't plan on putting these articles together, it's a total coincidence!

**Tenerezza** even has P/ECE integration!
A pop-up-pirate clone minigame on the handheld will grant rewards which you can then send to the main game.



Tenerezza's house acts as a base of operations, similar to an atelier in an Atelier game. You have a very small inventory to start with (20, including equipment) so storing items here is crucial if you plan to interact with any of the game's systems.
You can cook here, check your quest(s), load and save, go through your collection, and so on...

There's more in town. The craft system we saw in Megiddo clearly came from this game, as did the item shop. Accept quests from various NPCs, listen to their hot gossip, and buy items to use in the battles to come. You can submit materials dropped by monsters or found in chests to unlock recipes, equipment, and even increased inventory sizes.

Once you step beyond the confines of town and venture out into the wilds, your button layout is replaced with a combat-focused one. You have a melee attack, but Tenerezza is a mage, so you'll usually be fighting from range. You can swap between spells on the fly (shoulder buttons on an Xbox controller) and depending on the enemy, you'll want to switch your element. Throwing bombs at enemies sadly doesn't solve every problem in this game...

As you level up, you can invest points into stats. Increase your HP, melee damage, or improve a given element of magic. My recommendation? Don't put all your points into melee—it's unplayable!

Your four elements of magic aren't just a change of damage type.
Fire is a high-damage projectile that fires in a straight line. It's very good, but requires that you aim, so you have to position well while dodging enemy attacks.
Water shoots an arc of three bullets. Higher spread, so you don't have to aim as well, but each projectile is weaker than fire. I think I'd recommend most players focus on this one to start.
Earth throws a bomb forward. It's your best AOE option, but it relies on the enemies being grouped closely together.
And Wind was what I gravitated towards. A more movement-focused option, it fires one homing projectile forward and one backwards. It's weaker than the others, but this spell is the only one that doesn't rely on you facing the enemy to damage them. That makes it very easy to kite enemies around.

As you grow stronger, modified casts of these elements can be unlockd. This can do things such as increasing the number of projectiles fired per cast, but also may allow you to charge the spell before casting to create a stronger, flashier spell. Doing this leaves you vulnerable while you channel the spell, but makes you immune to damage for a short time after. These are great for cases where you know a bunch of enemies are about to surround you, but leave the bomb spell feeling quite useless.

One thing that adds a lot to the usability of all these spells is that, in the time between pressing the button to cast and releasing it, you can still adjust your position. Because of this, you can snap Tenerezza to face the direction of an enemy in the split-second where you press the attack button, allowing for very precise aiming, even with analog stick movement. In an extreme case, you could snap 90 degrees, but more practically, it's a way for you to make micro-adjustments to your aim without having to think about it. It feels very natural and intuitive.

Melee is worth a mention. Tenerezza's blade has a small hitbox and locks her in place during the attack animation, so it really is a last resort, however melee damage scales well, and the end-game weapons can have effects such as guaranteeing item drops or healing you for half of the damage dealt—the only non-item healing effect in the game.

I had a lot of fun fighting some of the bigger enemies. It's not a complex battle system, but figuring out ways to navigate the environment and use my spells in order to defeat them without taking any damage became a habit, and that's not something I usually do.

# テネレッツァ Tenerezza

## What's Over There!?

What makes this game stand out is undoubtedly the art style. It reminds me of Napple Tale, a bit of Sonic Adventure, and the colorful low-poly aesthetic is very charming, I think. The environments are small, but they're nice to spend time. The enemy design is very cute and cartoony, very appealing to me in a way that's reminiscient of some free to play MMOs of the early 2000s. Dragon Quest-like, one might say.

The most appealing aspect to me, however, is how no-nonsense everything is. Combat is immediate without pause, loading screens are basically nonexistent, movement and action inputs are snappy, and (as illustrated by the previously-mentioned speedruns), you can get through it quite quickly once you know what you're doing.
Yet, there is a story you may want to read through. There are some simple sidequests you may want to explore. Collectables may trigger your desire to complete a game as fully as possible. The mandatory content is brisk, and you're trusted to play as little or as much optional content as you wish.

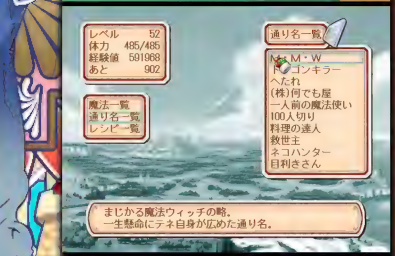
But in typical Aquaplus fashion, the pleasant soundtrack gets repetitive. Their inability to produce enough music to support a game is frankly remarkable. The individual songs are good, and I suggest you look up the song that plays in the hub town of Esperanza for any chill videogame OST playlists you may have, but I was sick of hearing some of the tracks by the time I was done.

Where this game falls behind in comparison to the oh-so-similar Megiddo, at least to me, is the story. Now, I was never able to truly appreciate the types of plots found in the Atelier games, so a part of my opinion is likely based in that bias, but I also don't think the dialogue is very well written, and the complete lack of narration holds it back.

Every time they try to be serious, I'm sat there asking when the scene will pivot into a punchline or an off-the-cuff gag. Sure enough, it always comes.
They love ending scenes by having one character remain in frame to give some closing words to themselves, maybe a symptom of the 'no narration' problem.
And most of the comedy is boring, and sometimes even forced. The written stuff is dad joke tier, but I think there was one good bit of slapstick, though it gets reused over and over, so the charm of that one wore thin.

Although the lack of narration limits the emotional investment we can have in the cast, another limiting factor is in how Tenerezza is a solo act. Roro flies behind us for much of the game, but she's hardly an active participant. There's no way for other characters to join Tenerezza on a quest in the field, so they never really do.
Some optional quests will have a side character join you only to be conveniently taken off-screen, but of the main cast, only Tene gets playtime.

But what about downtime? Well, the side quests are all reserved for the town's typically unvoiced side characters, so the people who matter most to the main plot don't get any content outside of the main plot.
So although there's potential for Tenerezza's growing group to endear me, I finished my 20-something-hour playthrough feeling I hardly knew them.



The voice acting for some of the characters is pretty poor too. Not Tene's, thankfully, but... the emotions of the others aren't sold well. The actors were absolutely limited by the writing, but even so I'm doubtful of their abilities.

I looked up a handful of reviews, both in English and Japanese, and this seems to be a pretty common criticism.
Still, I don't think some of the cast were helped much by the silly speaking styles given to their characters. No matter how emotion they attempt to put into Roro, for example it'll always be hard to take her seriously, solely because of how cartoonish her general mannerisms are.

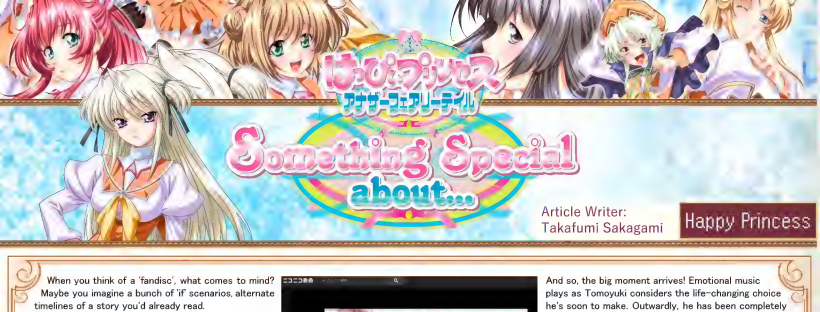
So while I do think the actual gameplay is more fun than that of its younger turn-based sibling, and the artstyle is incredibly charming, as a story-experience, I don't believe it is worth playing, so long as story is your one and only priority.
That being said, I had more fun on average here than in Kimi ga Yobu, Megiddo no Oka de. Doing the side content, mundane activities, and striving for a 100% completion was very addicting.

I don't know where that leaves me, in regards to my final feelings. Utawarerumono had a great story despite its poor gameplay, and was memorable to me as a result. Megiddo, not so much, but there are scenes I can recall with fondness as truly special.
None of that exists in Tenerezza. It was a good time, but there's no particular moment I can see myself looking back on fondly. How will I feel about this game in a year, or in five years?

Y'know, I've been ill or injured for... several months now. That's partly why the previous issue of G-pie! took so long to come out. As soon as one problem ends, another begins. I've always been the type of person who pushes on without worry, but... I've never had such a large chunk of my life dictated by illness without interruption. And when pain or worry is the primary emotion running through your head, I admit, it can become hard to focus on reading.

So even though the reading experience of Tenerezza lacks, I really appreciated it. Running around as Tenerezza, blasting foes and collecting items, was a very effective distraction.

If, five years from now, pain should take me over... I wouldn't mind booting up the Xbox and running around as Tene again.
A comfy game, yes, but a comfort game also.




Article Writer:
Takafumi Sakagami



When you think of a 'fandisc', what comes to mind? Maybe you imagine a bunch of 'if' scenarios, alternate timelines of a story you'd already read.
Maybe you think of short follow-ups to the routes in the original game.
Maybe you dream of the cute side character getting her own story.

In practice, fandiscs are quite limited in their scope. They are a bit of extra content for dedicated fans, but... what if we went a bit different with it?
Wouldn't it be interesting if a developer decided to ask the fans directly what they'd want from a fandisc?

Developed by Terios, **Happy Princess** isn't a popular game by any means, but it has its fans. Those fans are gonna be important later, but let's start at the start.

The selling point of **Happri**? It's an ojousama game. There are a bunch of pretty princesses from a foreign land that exists in another realm which no one on Earth has heard of. Whichever one marries the protagonist will gain power, and that's the set up. By most regards, it's a generic light eroge plot that, if not for the impressive voice cast, would be entirely forgettable.

For those reasons (and many more), I'm not interested in **Happy Princess.** That's not the game we're talking about. But it was a game that fostered a dedicated fanbase, and what's most important in this backstory is the existence of those fans.
Why? Well, it all comes down to the dedicated Terios web broadcast, something the company had long been using to promote their works. Surprisingly, the broadcasts have all been archived, so I was able to step back in time and listen to the Terios of the 2000s.

So Terios ran an internet radio show hosted by one of the **Happy Princess** voice actors, Oohana Don, plus mainstay actor in the company's games, Kaneda Mahiru.

After **Happy Princess**'s release, a new, innocuous corner began to air. Similar to a segment in which listeners could propose legislation towards making an ideal country, this new corner asked for viewers to write in with their ideas of the ideal woman, all for the hosts to react to.
To briefly summarize those ideas, I'll cut a quote from the 30th episode of the broadcast:

*"tsundere, twintail, kneesocks zettai ryouiki, princess in poverty, and all kinds of ideas..."*

In secret, however, those ideas were being used to create a new heroine to add into **Happy Princess**.
This new heroine's behaviour, her manner of speaking, as well as.. everything else... would be determined by listener submissions!

She's a fan character designed by the collective fanbase, making this an ojousama created by fans of an ojousama game. In my head, I hear that and imagine a melting pot of ojousama tropes.

And so, **Happy Princess ～Another Fairytale～** is a fandisc that, along with the usual spinoff stories you'd expect of a fandisc, includes a route for this radio-made character: Nikita Martemiyanov.

The route begins where the common route of the original game ends off. Tomoyuki (having spent time alongside the various candidates), has grown complacent. So when the deadline to choose his partner finally arrives, the life he has been taking for granted comes into question.

And so, the big moment arrives! Emotional music plays as Tomoyuki considers the life-changing choice he's soon to make. Outwardly, he has been completely against this whole thing, and the girls aren't even sure if he intends to choose any of them. The suspense builds, he tries to speak up, and at that very moment...
A shout cuts through the many emotions!

Here to intrude on the established plot is new girl Nikita. Then she trips over and ruins the moment even further... No one knows who she is, but she certainly thinks herself as a big enough deal to diss everyone for ruining her cool entrance.

Voiced by the radio lady Kaneda Mahiru, Nikita is a rich, selfish tsundere. She's got blonde hair partially tied up in twintails, her eyes are a sharp tsurime design, she's smug, a bit clumsy, a bit dumb, and as we've encountered many times in the past... this rich girl is poor!

Heir to a Kingdom which no longer exists, her family have pridefully refused help from anyone and are clinging onto their former glory in hopes of reviving their great kingdom, and as a result of all that, she's now left with nothing and no one.
For that reason, she's more desperate to win this battle for the protagonist's affections than anyone, but... she's also more of a disaster than anyone, and her desperation only makes her seem more pathetic.

Plus, nobody was expecting her, so they wouldn't be able to accomodate her even if they wanted to. The most the others can do is acknowledge her competition entry and leave her to her own devices.
Unfortunately for Nikita, she really has nothing going for her.

But despite her late entrance, lack of support, and none of the housing arrangements that all the other characters got, Nikita's determined to win this contest and use it to propel her towards world conquest!

There's a lot to say about the character; it's hard to know where to even begin. Every line of dialogue is delivered in quintessential tsundere manner, distilled to its purest form.

For the tsun, she doesn't hold back. Everyone is 'anta' and 'aitsu', there's a heavy helping of 'urusai' and 'baka', and she responds with phrases like 'naniyo' and 'souyo'.

For dere, Nikita's a hopeless clutz with high expectations placed upon her, she's a loner whose one and only friend is a plushie, and if you happen to catch her with her guard down, you'll see that she's a very meek, shy person.

In times of need, the two sides to her personality clash—the lonely girl who needs help and the princess who must rule.

She'll continue to boast and act arrogant while begging for help, growing angrier and more desperate each time you refuse. She's both tsun and dere, and giving up on either side would be giving up on herself.

She is all of this, all the time. I was basically smiling every time she spoke. It's such a pure depiction of the trope, a trope that has, frankly, spent more time being subverted and parodied than established.
You don't notice how rare it is to see these... archetypal roles... played straight until you start looking for sincere representations of them.

Also, the voice actor's delivery reminds me quite a bit of Tohsaka Rin from **Fate**, so if you're a Tohsaka fan, maybe add this one to your reading list. You don't have to play the original. A decent amount of time is spent on re-capping and reestablishing the cast and setting.

With nowhere to go and no one to rely on, she plans to spend her first night in this world on the street, but being a beautiful lady, she—of course—attracts the attention of a couple sleazebags, the *"let's go have some fun together"* kind.

Our hero, worried about leaving Nikita without a place to stay, goes off looking for her and stumbles into the scene just as Nikita breaks free from the nanpa nitwits. Then, after much arguing, Nikita winds up staying at Tomoyuki's house.

From there, I'd say the hook of the route is twofold: daily interaction between the two characters, and uncovering the truth behind Nikita's situation. Is that a strong hook? Maybe for the right person, but I wouldn't be surprised if you don't find it exciting. It is, like a lot of stories about this archetype, a simple tale of learning to trust others—to ask somebody an honest question, and to trust their answer as honest.

This isn't anything new or groundbreaking, and it's not an ambitious work. At the end of the day, it's a single, linear route in a fandisc. The amount of sprites is very limited, there's little flair to the presentation, the writing style is plain and straightforward, and the UI is... well, it looks like this when you open up a menu.

But it's been more than a year since I began this search for a perfect representation of the rich, blonde tsundere archetype, and while I've found some good characters... None of them have been perfect. Don't get me wrong; I have loved getting to spend time with characters such as Sena Airi and Katori Rea. Every time I play a new game, I encounter a new tsundere who is slightly unique.

Maybe they have immense empathy like Kisaragi Mifuyu; maybe they're manipulative like the twins from **Kissing!**, but none of them—if I can word this as a negative—have been tropey enough to truly be the perfect tsundere ojou.

The potential Nikita held, when I planned out which games to cover in C–pia! over two years ago now, was immense.
A collection of tropes held together by a fanbase's sheer love! ...still, reality rarely results in realised potential.

Once I booted up the game, I got my answer surprisingly fast. It must've taken me a minute at the most to come to my conclusion.
As Nikita loudly made her entrance, stepping all over the other girls' pride, using all the classic phrases and poses, illustrated in this beautiful artstyle and voiced by a seiyū who completely understands the assignment...
I mean, I'd found her: the perfect tsundere ojousama.

Two years ago, I really wasn't sure such a thing existed within the realm of adventure and novel games, but here she is!
Whenever Nikita was on screen, I smiled. It's that simple. That means more to me than an ugly UI or a light plot.

It sounds like such a basic thing, but... It's nice to smile, don't you think? It represents so much. It's a feeling that some people wish for in the moments before they sleep:

*"I hope that tomorrow will be happier."*

I'm always in search of these simple joys. Sometimes it lasts mere moments, and sometimes it takes a couple of years, but it's a wonderful thing. I mean, I live to smile! So do you, and so you will, one day. Maybe not at Nikita, maybe not at a tsundere, but regardless of your tastes, small things can bring each of us the greatest of joys.

Nikita is the manifestation of a small fanbase's greatest joy. It's fandisc content in its truest form. So if you want to create that joy in others... just ask the world what it loves, and trust in their reply.
The lesson of this fandisc and the message of this route... they practically rhyme.

# Have you ever...?

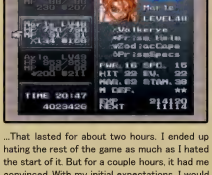
It's been a while since we had a candid chat, but the timing of this volume of C-pia! created a confluence of factors that got me thinking about something...

As Tsukiyo mentioned in her **Dragon Quest IX** article, those of us in Europe didn't get access to a lot of Japan's 16-bit RPG output until the Nintendo DS came around.
I didn't pick up **Dragon Quest IX** back then but I did pick up a different DS game featuring the very same art style: **Chrono Trigger**. Toriyama must've had an eye-catching aesthetic.

I had recently beaten **Final Fantasy IV**, back then, and I was looking for more, so I chose a Square title. Sadly, I didn't enjoy my time with the game. I dropped it just after adding Frog to the party and doing his little storyline.

That was 2009. It's been a long time since, and I'd always meant to go back to it one day, to give it a second chance. At the start of 2026, I did. I went with the SNES version this time, and let me say, playing it on a TV is so much better than on a tiny pixelated screen.

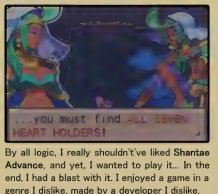
That being said, my tastes have never changed. I responded to the game in the very same way. By the time Frog was in my party, I was burnt out and ready to quit. Still, I pushed on through and to my surprise, the story began! Not just that, it was interesting! I was having fun!




...That lasted for about two hours. I ended up hating the rest of the game as much as I hated the start of it. But for a couple hours, it had me convinced. With my initial expectations, I would not be surprised to dislike it, but after seeing a glimmer of potential... I was surprised to be let down. How did I not enjoy a game in a genre I love, made by devs I love, that everybody loves?

## Surprises

But then, another game featured in this issue is the newest Shantae. I played that on my GBA. I'm not sure why; I tried The Pirate's Curse in 2014 and disliked it. Same for the GBC game.

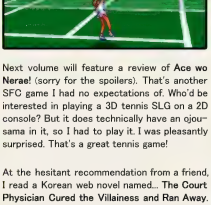



By all logic, I really shouldn't've liked **Shantae Advance**, and yet, I wanted to play it... In the end, I had a blast with it. I enjoyed a game in a genre I dislike, made by a developer I dislike.

It's with this in mind that I ask, have you ever been surprised by how much you did or did not like something?

It's odd. I feel like I know my tastes well. I saw a short trailer for **Harvestella** in a Nintendo Direct and I immediately knew it would be my favourite game. I saw a several-second-long PV for **Sora Yori mo Tooi Basho** and knew it would be my favourite anime. Show me a list of heroines from a game I've never played and I'll tell you which one is my favourite. I'm very predictable.

But every once in a while, something appears out of nowhere. **GS Mikami: Joreishi wa Nice Body**, which was featured in the last volume of C-pia! Magazine, is a one I played because I saw it was expensive online and cheap in a store. It was a good deal. As a result, I found one of my favourite SNES/SFC platformers. That's coming from someone whose first real experience with gaming came with the SNES.




Next volume will feature a review of **Ace wo Nerae!** (sorry for the spoilers). That's another SFC game I had no expectations of. Who'd be interested in playing a 3D tennis SLG on a 2D console? But it does technically have an ojou-sama in it, so I had to play it. I was pleasantly surprised. That's a great tennis game!

At the hesitant recommendation from a friend, I read a Korean web novel named... **The Court Physician Cured the Villainess and Ran Away**. I've never read a Korean novel, and there was practically no information about it in English. As of this volume's publishing date, if you look it up, my piddly review will be in the top three search results. But boy did I love reading it.

It's far easier for me to find positive examples.

Maybe it'll be different for you, but I don't hype myself up much, so it's hard to be disappointed. It takes something offensive to let me down. In the world of bishoujoge, **Heaven Burns Red** is the only example of such a game I can think of. That was a frustrating one, as a Key fan.

But then, when I was first shown that **AIR** box art in the mid 2000s by a friend, just to shrug it off and talk about other things, I had no idea how much that image would stick in my brain all these years later. When **Summer Pockets**' box art came out, I recognised it immediately!

# Have you ever...?

That's an image I'm surprised to have liked as much as I have, AIR's box art. Conversely, I'm not saying Kanon's cover art ripped off Rolfee, but the similarities are undeniable.

◂ Tensai no Princess Rolfee (1992). ▾ Kanon Regular Edition (1999).

Oh, the **Rolfee** review is in the issue after the next, by the way. Sorry for more spoilers.

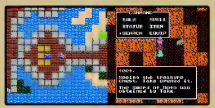
Anyway, what I'm trying to say is... I'm good at judging a book by its cover.

So far this year, when I've sat down to chat with someone about ♡-pia!, there's been an odd trend. Eventually, they get talking about "**fake fans**". The popularity of the bishoujoge aesthetic has seemingly surpassed bishoujoge itself, reaching those who hate the source. A child who, like an old, white, Christian person finding out about **Rapelay** in 2008, discovers **Saya no Uta** and ridicules it for being immoral smut... and yet, they long to claim the artwork for themselves and free it from its origins.

It's nothing new, really—**Sailor Moon**'s titled as **Bishoujo Senshi**, after all—but apparently it's becoming more common.

There is, invariably, a certain level of aesthetic appreciation prior to engagement, I believe. We are database animals, aren't we? Just look at **Happy Princess**; the way we consume is often intrinsically based on surface-level information. Maybe you like moege or nakige, maybe you like osananajimi or onee-san. Blonde hair, twintails? Zettai ryouiki? Consumerist passion is a series of tags.
If only the database responsible for collating all those tags together didn't keep deleting entries.

It is true, then, that I look at the box of a game like **Chrono Trigger** or **Dragon Quest** and think, "this isn't something I like." But then I play it to confirm that fact.



It is true, then, that I look at the **Pia♥Carrot e Youkoso!!** girls and think Tomomi's my favourite in the franchise. One day, I'll play more than just the first entry to confirm that fact.

It's impossible to deny that an aesthetic-level appreciation is something that we all do. I long to be at the library more than I long to read. Whether their appreciation for **Saya no Uta** is any less genuine than that of someone who's delved into the product, I wouldn't be able to say.

Thinking about it, they probably appreciate it more than I ever have, that's for sure. It didn't leave much of a lasting impression on me, so I may as well have not read it.

Still, the intent to one day engage with it on a deeper level, putting aside your surface level judgement in the process, is important to me.
For my own sake, I try to go a bit beyond that. That's part of the reason why ♡-pia! exists.

I don't enjoy magical girl shows, but I still give them a shot.

I don't like otome games, but I'm willing to keep trying them.

Sometimes... or well, most of the time... it'll wind up being exactly what I expect it to be: not for me. But, very rarely, it'll surprise me. At times, surprise is a form of disappointment. At times, surprise is a newfound love.
You don't really know until you try, do you?

And in a tomorrow yet to come, I believe I'll be pleasantly surprised by a magical girl anime or an otome game.

Maybe that time investment is a luxury I can afford, that others can't... But I'm sure a lot of people spend an equivalent amount of time on browsing social media, taking selfies, and so on. Is an hour spent on trying something new really that much of a cost?

So while I think making judgement on something at a glance is perfectly fine... Being unwilling to challenge yourself is being unwilling to change yourself, and to remain unchanging is to become stagnant. I think that's a shame.

Like a database, the brain functions best when you try to fill in the blanks. So try something new, and when you're done, tell us a story.
How did it surprise you?

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# †Dagger†

Article Writer:
Takafumi Sakagami

DAGGER

# A Two Decade Adventure

## So what is DAGGER anyway? Here's a quick catch-up!

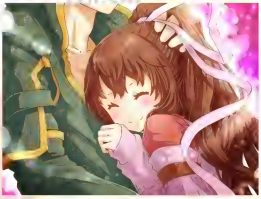
**† Aisis Rindante †** (アイシス リンダンテ)

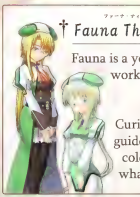
A young girl, determined to be stronger than anyone. Once treated as a slave, a passing man named Telist frees her and becomes her teacher in combat.

**† Yui Karnaes †** (ユイ カルナス)

Daughter to an ex-mercenary couple, Yui is a kind soul.

Gentle and full of empathy, yet she's strong in her own way.





**† Fauna Thirunas †** (フィーナ ティルナス)

Fauna is a young strategist who works in the royal castle of Roais.

Curiosity and discovery guide her ambitions, but cold, calculated logic is what steers her actions.

In 2004, a quaint doujin circle of Key fans named **The sense of sight** created **～DAGGER～**. It was an ambitious, short, fantasy novel game focused on a heroine named Aisis, and with ambition comes, of course, expansion.

Two further games—the **Chapter of Blue** and **Red**—added two new routes each, while keeping Aisis involved, and eventually these two were compiled into the singular **Dagger: Senka no Kizuna**. A 40-hour epic.

## Renewal

As the size of the script increased rapidly, the amount of assets to compliment it did not. With an ever-growing passion on the creator's mind, drastic measures were taken: this game has outgrown itself; let's turn it into a series!

It was a decision that would transform a rough indie game into a 7-volume series that finally concluded over 20 years after **DAGGER** began. It's a true product of passion, but... given that the series has little coerage in Japan and none overseas, I should probably start by explaining what this series is and why I'm playing it.

I'm a sucker for found-families. As mentioned in a previous C-pia! Magazine review of **Parfait**, I like stories that bring a community together to create a place in time that I grow to love and then to miss. I was driven to **Parfait** back then because of a restaurant-set **GTA** series I'd been a fan of during that time, but my true passion's for fantasy. I find that, with fantasy settings, it's a lot easier to extend the size of that nostalgic place beyond a small town, into a whole world.

That, and I've just watched a **GTA** series where a group of veterans trained some apprentices, and **Dagger** is about man training a young kid how to use the same weapon he uses: a dagger. The **Parfait** comparison was twofold...

So here we have a series about a small group of characters—some old; some young—all from different backgrounds, joining together despite their differences, to live and survive.

# Plot & Characters

### † Reace Randbald †

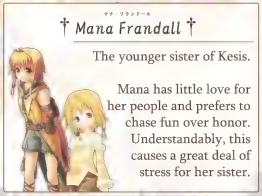
A human princess from the kingdom of Roais.

Meek and sheltered, she admires Telist as a representation of the freedom she so desires to attain.

### † Kesis Frandall †

A spirit and defender of her people, Kesis is a proud warrior.

Harsh in battle, kind at home, and a little bit strict when it comes to her sister.



### † Mana Frandall †

The younger sister of Kesis.

Mana has little love for her people and prefers to chase fun over honor. Understandably, this causes a great deal of stress for her sister.

### † Sernoa Grace †

A demon princess from the far off city of Grace.

She's powerful, quick-witted, and a good kid, but she tries her best to hide that last bit.

## A World of Characters to Discover!

Though beginning as just a story of Aisis, **Chapter of Blue** added routes for Yui and Fauna, while **Chapter of Red** added routes for Reace and Sernoa. All return for the remake series... with some redesigns.

It'd be easy to highlight the pretty ladies and brush all of the others aside, but there are plenty of sprited side characters who populate the world and give it a lived-in atmosphere.

# Plot & Characters

## Let's start by quickly going over the story of the series...

Welcome to a world of swords and spells, mythical creatures, political intrigue, corruption, and hope.
A war between three races, locked to a single continent, recently met a tentative break, establishing this unfamiliar age of peace.

Telist Rayia is a man who, despite his kind heart, has given up on the world. He's incredibly strong, and yet, he lives a defeated life.

In an abandoned child turned slave, Aisis Rindante, he sees someone he can relate to. Her lifeless eyes are like a physical representation of his heart. Maybe that's why he tries to help her...

With a push from his old friend Yui, Telist becomes a teacher to Aisis—helping her to defend herself while steering her away from making the same mistakes he once made.

## The Three Kingdoms

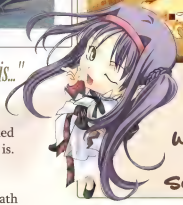
*"I'm not sure there's such a thing as a 'nice person', but if there is..."*

Summing the whole thing up is a bit tough...
There's a near idol-like influence at play here. Or streamer-like, maybe. Telist is someone who burnt up his youth doing things he didn't want to do. He was raised to fight a war and now he's not sure how to live.

The benefit of his actions are two-fold: he has a very good network of connections in high places, and he has a lot of money. But a lot of his connections are related to business or combat. He's not spending much because Telist was raised to fight in an age of war, not to have fun.

The benefits of the lifestyle he led don't suit the kind of person he is. So Aisis is like a second chance. His connections, money, and his own experience walking a path similar to her's, finally get put to use. He's one a generation of war-torn people giving their children what they themselves never had.

And yet, the new era of peace isn't a certain thing. The happiness of seeing two people finally learn to enjoy life is complimented by the tension of knowing that happiness isn't guaranteed; the life they live could end any day now.



**Take a map. You might get lost without it!**

**Western Forests: Spirits**
**Eastern Fields: Humans**
**Southern Desert: Demons**

*"I'd like to meet one, at least once, before I die."*

That's the initial synopsis: an age of tragedy has ended, but another is to come. So within that context, our small group of heroes from different backgrounds try to find happiness in the brief little window of freedom granted to them.

Furthermore is the desire to preserve 'happiness' as long as they can.
As nations act in their usual way; by plotting, scheming, debating, and battling—our protagonist vows to protect those who matter to him.

# Two Humble Chapters; One Humble Introduction

There exists three lands, each inhabited by a singular race. However, the societal expansion of the Human race, paired with the Demon race's diminishing agriculture, brings this peaceful division to an end.

Without endless peace, the people begin to awaken to new emotions and thoughts: fear, paranoia, distrust. It's every man for himself, and logically, the best method of survival is to wipe out every threat, so... things grow pretty bad pretty fast.

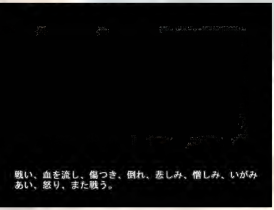
But as the bodies of the dead pile up, so too does exhaustion. And so, a tentative peace is brokered by the three species, and a promise is made to never interact with one another ever again... But even so, the factors that led to this conflict yet exist. Further conflict is inevitable.

The old fashioned man acting as protag, Telist Rayia, was known as the one man army... His distaste for this grim world is palpable.

Telist is, despite his reputation, a softie at heart. He hopes for a better future, and has an unwillingness to accept the cruelties others view as normal aspects of daily life as standard; there's no need for a hurtful world anymore.

So when he meets a young slave girl one day during his walk home, he winds up paying for her freedom and becoming her guardian, her teacher, and maybe one day he'll even become her hero...

That's a quaint beginning to the story, and the presentation is just as quaint.
This introductory bit of lore about the setting, far more detailed in-game, is told as white text on a black background, the text taking up but a sliver of the game window.




Beyond the beginning, pretty backgrounds and small sprites make up all of the visual appeal.

The UI is largely stock engine UI, and choices can be a bit hard to read when highlighted. Even on the title screen, the image buttons can become indecipherable.

There's not much music, but what little exists is nice and original, but many of the tracks are short and care wasn't given to ensure the music loops well... However, care has been put into the use of sound effects, which means a lot to me, especially in a game with no voices.

If you've played indie NScripter games before, this style won't be unfamiliar to you at all. It's not something you would fairly compare to a title with real budget behind it, (even if that budget is small), but with fair relativity, I find that it looks and sounds quite impressive in the moments where time has been clearly invested. Basically, whenever custom assets are present, it's great.

But presentation isn't just about the visuals and the sound; the script matters a lot too. While it has rough edges—the script is rambly at times, info-dumping is clumsy, and the structure of events can leave things feeling a bit aimless—there's a lot of potential.

Despite technically being an ADV, especially once you pile on all of the additions from the Blue and Red chapters, the simple NVL origins form the bulk of the game's identity when it comes to both marketing and prose. There's a good amount of narration inbetween dialogue, the point-of-view swaps frequently between characters, and care is put into the rhythm and structure of sentences and scenes, at times.

Choices are rare, but meaningful. Your second playthrough of the game will, (assuming you go down a different route), result in a different story of substantial length. It's not a complex route system, and most of the decisions you'll make will occur within the first few hours, but the potential strengths of the format remain.

However, the text isn't reliant on the genre to function. Visuals aren't replacement for prose. Choices aren't a constant of player interaction.

So while there's obvious strength to the game, there's also obvious weakness. It's easy to see why the developers sook to expand it the way they did.

# Remake

The first chapter in the Renewal series begins slightly differently to the original game. Gone is the black-screen info dump, and in its place, a simple chapter name, plus a graphic detailing which character's PoV the upcoming chapter will be delivered through.
Neither of these things existed in the original, and it's a sign of things to come.

The script is similar at the start, if refined. But on the whole, it is a different piece of writing to the original. The music's often the same, the engine is the same, but the words are different, backgrounds are different, and even the events that occur can be different!

General progression between the two versions has some overlap initially, but there's a lot of deviation between overlapping moments.
The placement of common scenes can change drastically. Same synopsis; different script.

I'm not going to pretend that the remake series is always an improvement upon the original, but it certainly feels more complete. I've tried to get my comparison screenshots as close to 1-to-1 as possible, but as you can see, they don't really match.

Some moments are shorter and snappier, while others have more detail or personality. It's as if the writer has a firmer grasp on the characters and the world out of the gate, so they're able to more efficiently focus them in on their core traits, their place in the story, as well as their thematic goal. In short, it's more planned out and less spontaneously written.

In the original, a character's inner monologue might be full of stream-of-thought questions, all logically pointing out problems in the way they're acting, and it doesn't feel like how the character would think. It's like the author is trying to find the answers by writing down all of their doubts.

There are aimless moments where the plot is trying to find itself, scenes where characters don't feel consistently themselves, and so on... The telltale signs of spontaneous scripting are very present in the original work.

But the lick of polish delivered by the renewed version does away with these kinds of quirks, and that's why it feels more planned out, to me. This does mean there are big changes, at times, in how characters think and behave. There are fewer contradictions in the character writting, but this inherently changes their personalities, and you may prefer the rougher original.

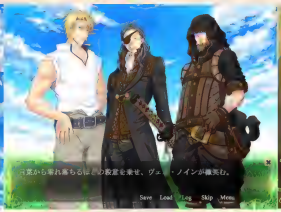
Speaking of contradictions, some of the art in the original didn't fully align with the script it was meant to compliment. In this new version, the art makes more logical sense in regards to the script it's depicting, but... I do prefer the original artwork in some ways. There's a slight melancholic feel to the sketchy backgrounds and harshly-lit CGs of the original.

The odd decision to recreate all of the art from the original game does mean that, rather than getting a whole heap of additional CGs on top of what we already had, much of the budget is spent on replacing artwork that already existed.

Cases where a background would be swapped out, only for the very same background to fade in, have been eliminated.
Characters other than Aisis get a lot more love than they previously did. Side characters have sprites now; that stuff matters. Conversely, the music is still just as limited, which is a shame.

To me, the way things come together—at least when talking about the creative identity of the two works—leaves room for the original game to exist. There's still a reason to play it. It's not a waste to buy the original before checking out the new stuff, even if they tell a similar story, especially if you prefer the old aesthetic.

Still, the original is a compromised experience overall, and readers who've never delved into the indie market may struggle to enjoy such a compromised experience. Having read both, I can't understate how characters make so much more sense in the remake. Genuinely, I can't explain the full extent of the changes.



## Two Humble Chapters; One Humble Introduction

Going back to the rambling nature of the original script, it's worth mentioning the context around the many releases in the series. If you navigate your way to old webpages or stores promoting **DAGGER** in its earliest iteration, you'll see a crucial metric placed into the game's description: play time.

The value of a large script that takes hours and hours to completely read was viewed as important by the creators, at the time.

But as the bodies of the dead pile up, so If you look at the modern **Dagger** series, word count is no longer treated as the primary metric of quality. These games are shorter than **Chapter of Red** or **Blue**, and it isn't marketed as a series that will eat up all your time.

You can see the priority shift from sheer quantity to quality, and naturally, this change in philosophy has a large impact on the work.

In one scene, Aisis asks Yui why she's being so generous. In the original, we get a brief *"Telist asked me to, so don't worry about it."* This is a single line in a scene that's mostly comprised of unspoken, unanswered questions which flow through Aisis's mind.

In the remake, the inner monologue is now a genuine dialogue, and Yui responds by saying that the man who asked her for help (Telist), rarely opens up in such a way, so she treasures the moments when he does. This is used as a launching pad for a conversation contrasting the personalities and upbringings of these two girls—one who's happy, surrounded by family; the other, who recently escaped enslavement.

Reading that scene, it all made sense. Of course Telist would act that way. Of course Yui would act that way. Of course Aisis wouldn't get it.

These reactions make sense for the characters, but they didn't exist in the original because... Telist, Aisis, Yui—they were poorly defined at this point in the narrative.

I had that feeling over and over again. It's as if the original game's cast is made of characters fulfilling their roles, while the remake's cast is made up of people living their lives.

Speaking of, this isn't an adventure game like the original was. Gone are the choices splitting up the story into multiple routes, and changed are a lot of the heroine introductions. The first entry in the remake series largely follows the Aisis route—the content from the very earliest **DAGGER** release—and then spins the story off from there. I prefer this way of telling the story. The world feels more lively and connected as the content isn't splintered across routes.

But the real changes comes after the initial entry is done.

Subsequent entries in the franchise have you hopping from one perspective to another, as you inhabit the minds of characters, ones you probably won't expect. At the same time, you will be hopping from one corner of the world to another.

# Remake

With each swap of perspective, the graphics indicating which character you are jumping to become more and more beautiful.

You may've noticed from the many screen-shots littered throughout the article—other parts of the game also grow more beautiful. The UI is developed, with ornate dressing to the textbox, function buttons on screen, and dedicated menus with unique designs.

The main suite of music remains in every title, but new songs appear as you progress through the games, and vocal tracks can crop up during special moments.

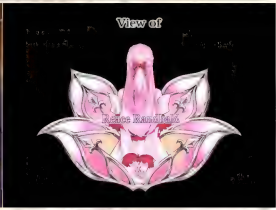
Despite all the expansion, all the additions, and all the perspective switches, the heart of the story remains squarely on the small community that is based in the very place the story first started in.

There'll be a grand quest, you'll follow an adventure, and relationships will change, but at the end of the day, you'll return to a comfortable place in the world where the 'everyday' is.
Naturally, the memories build.

Your attachment to that place grows, and it becomes the eternal place to return to.

In that, the contrast becomes obvious. When the the story began, we met two characters who had no place in this world; a drifting warrior and a newly-imprisoned slave.
In the cold settlement where they first met, a place that brought them to rock-bottom, they find somewhere they long to return to.

The start and end could be described with that contrast, but the between matters more.
How did the town change?
How did the characters change?
How did their environment change? And... most of all, how did your understanding of it all change?




This is a story that began as one thing, but then changed. The names and the places of **DAGGER** and the **Dagger** series are the same. Their plots follow similar beats, to an extent. Their casts are similar. But the origin is just the start, and the conclusion is nothing more than an end.
The contrast between the two projects becomes obvious, when I highlight it, but... the between matters more, to me.

How did the project change?
How did the execution change?
The writing, the technology, the presentation, the structure, and much more about this story was altered as it evolved.

Even as you go through the remake entries, each game is an evolution of the last. As it so happens, the creation of **Dagger** matches the foundational appeal of its narrative; it's all about continuance... and the everyday.

There are limitations. Things aren't perfect, and others won't always be there to support you, but... their support is what makes such change possible. The characters grow, as do the creators, as do the games. Maybe it's by accident, or maybe it's intentional, but the real journey behind this series mirrors the fictional journey of a small group of friends in a world they can't fully control.

In that, the contrast becomes obvious. When But as you spend more time with that creation, and within that imperfect world, the memories build. Your attachment to the series grows, and it becomes the eternal place to return to.

It's a comfortable place, where things are sometimes difficult, where conflict is inevitable, and where people who wish not to fight, give their all to live in a world not built to sustain them.

It may sound like a difficult place to survive in, and it is. Yet they long to survive because that's where their 'everyday' is.
It's a world you'll want to return to.

**Available from 'The sense of sight' on DLSite!**

# // UPDATING THE WEBSITE!

Article Writer: Takafumi Sakagami

Design

**It's been over a year since we discussed the website! What's changed?**

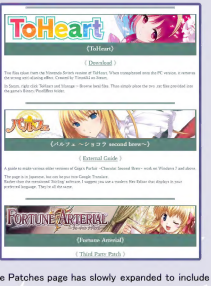
C-pia! Magazine
{C-pia! Magazine}
Cpia! is a free magazine that emulates the style and appeal of early-90s hobbyist game magazines.
C-pia!'s main focus is on covering Adventure games and Simulation games released pre-2010, but we also look at old anime, classic RPGs, retro-focused creators, and modern indie titles that seek to recapture the charm of older games.
{Quotes from our Readers}
"Truly brings me back to a time where it was new new discovery after another."
"C-, one of the best VN-related journalism pieces I've read over the years. It almost brought

A few volumes ago, there was a feature about the creation of the C-pia! website. The small changes made to the website have built up since then, so I would like to highlight some of the more noticeable alterations.

Most obviously to anyone who visits the website, users are now greeted by a video.

Beginning with our mascot, it fades into a montage of articles, giving an insight into what the magazine contains. I think it's a nice, immediate method of communicating exactly what C-pia! Magazine is to random visitors.

Also, to compliment this inclusion of an animated Sepia-tan, a small character design sheet using a neutral lighting profile has been added to the Info page.




The Patches page has slowly expanded to include various fixes and mods featured in previous C-pia! Magazine issues, the most recent being a **ToHeart 3D** mod.

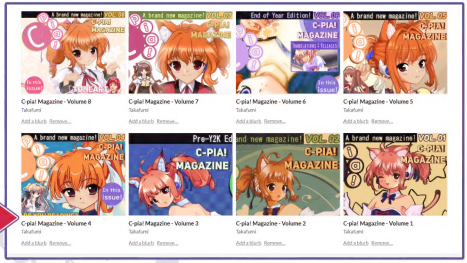
Then over on the Art page, downloads for all of our cover art at their original resolutions are available, as well as some other assets used in the magazine. With Volume 7's release, I chose to upload the final sketches too. But by the time I made this decision, I'd already wiped my old projects, so the only old sketches that survived were ones held for articles.

Also, I'm very self-conscious about how awful the sketch for this volume's cover is, so... I won't be uploading that. I almost scrapped the cover for this issue entirely, but I slept on it and decided not to.

I'll share the final sketch at the end of this volume, for posterity, but I really don't want people to see it.

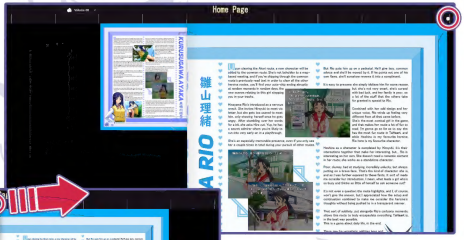
Source: https://github.com/C-pia/C-pia.github.io

Back to the main page, the 'Read It Here' section has undergone some changes. Archive.org uploads are the same as ever, but in response to feedback, downloads have been moved from Google Drive to itch.io. I think it's a more suitable platform for long term storage, it's indexable, and it's a lot better for those looking to organize issues into collections or reading lists.




But if you don't want to download every issue to have them on hand, and Archive.org happens to be inaccessible, as it sometimes is, you can now open up C-pia! Magazine on the website itself!

Pages are downscaled by 50% compared to other options to benefit those looking to quickly browse, as well as those with slower internet or on lower-power devices, so don't go saving the pages one-by-one, but if you just want to read the an issue or find an old article, this is a quick and easy way to do that.



The built-in magazine reader defaults to the latest entry, but a drop-down menu gives you access to every volume.
Once you begin reading, clicking on the right page will move you forward, clicking on the left page will bring you backwards. You can also navigate with a keyboard using traditional inputs.

If you want to focus on an individual page, this bar at the top can be used to adjust the zoom balance. As you progress, the URL of the page will update, allowing you to bookmark and share specific pages in specific volumes.
Both of these features could do with some polish, so I'll probably add to them as time passes.

Like with this very magazine, things can start off messy, but year-by-year, it'll maybe grow to impress you. That's the spirit I'm working with here. It's thanks to your feedback that my article layouts are slowly growing more polished and easier to follow, so if you have feedback on website's layout, its features, or its content, please do let me know. As always, contact information is on the website.

**CHECK IT OUT!** **C-PIA.GITHUB.IO**

# THANKS FOR READING!

## SOURCE PLEASE:

### 2 - Rapid Reviews

Screenshots from:
Shantae: Risky Revolution (GBA)
Mugen Senshi Valis (PC-Engine)
Cleopatra Fortune

### 3 - Contents

Shindou Yurika from Little Lovers SHE SO GAME.
Nikita Martemiyanov sprite from Happy Princess ~Another Fairytale~.
Aisis Rindante from the ~DAGGER~ Chapter of Blue boxart.

### 5 to 8 - News

All sources available at c-pia.github.io

### 9 to 11 - What Are You Reading?

Promo artwork from Little Lovers SHE SO GAME Art Book.
Box art from Little Lovers & Character CDs.
Little Lovers SHE SO GAME Episode IV manga introduction spread.
Box art, Logo & screenshots from Little Lovers SHE SO GAME.

### 12 to 14 - What's Over There!?

Screenshots and logo from Dragon Quest IX.
Promo artwork for Dragon Quest IX.

### 15 to 18 - What's Over There!?

Screenshots, logos and assets from Tenerezza & included P/ECE game.

### 19 & 20 - Something Special About...

Screenshots, logos and assets from Happy Princess ~Another Fairytale~.
Screenshot of Nico Nico Douga upload - Teriraji #30.

### 21 & 22 - Have You Ever...?

Screenshots from: Chrono Trigger, Shantae: Risky Revolution,
GS Mikami, Ace wo Nerae!, Dragon Quest,
Dragon Quest II, Angelique.
Box art of: AIR, Summer Pockets, Tonari no Princess Rolfee, Kanon.
MaCoPiX mascot of Aizawa Tomomi from Pia Carrot e Youkosou! 2.
Screenshot of Mahou no Princess Minky Momo.

### 23 to 30 - Special Feature: Dagger

Screenshots, logo and assets from various Dagger games.
Box art from ~DAGGER~ Chapter of Red.
Screenshot of Melonbooks store page for DAGGER 戦禍の絆.

## Kyacchi22

This issue of C-pia! Magazine was the sole creation of Takafumi Sakagami @ Kyacchi22, with an article submission by Tsukiyo.

This magazine is made for free and given out for free. If you'd like to support the creation of future issues, please share the magazine around with those who might be interested.

This may be a solo project, but we're always looking for contributions. If you love something, shout it out!

Without the work of other people, we'd have nothing to talk about in these pages, so I hope you don't mind if we dedicate a page to shouting out our sources.

C-pia!



This magazine is distributed for free.

Send all feedback, submissions, and business inquiries to
TakafumiSakagami@gmail.com

c-pia.github.io